

"because," he said to her one day, "you know and understand." Lady Burne-Jones has fulfilled the task thus laid upon her in a way that calls forth our most heartfelt thanks. She has drawn a true and vivid portrait of the man as we knew and loved him, and told the story of his life with perfect frankness, yet with the tenderness of one who stood very near him and was intimate with every detail. And at the same time she has given us a precious record of a group of men who will be remembered among the most remarkable figures of the Victorian age.

Professor Seeley once remarked that heredity and early influences sufficiently explained Rossetti's gifts as poet and painter, but that Burne-Jones's artistic vocation remained a mystery. Everything was against him in the beginning. He was born, on August 28, 1833, in an obscure home in the heart of Birmingham. His mother died soon after his birth, his father was a poor frame-maker, "pious and loving, but very narrow in his beliefs and ideas." The child's first recollection was that of going to bed hungry, the next that of a hunger of the soul, which was less easy to satisfy. His surroundings were unspeakably distasteful and vexatious. The streets of the great Midland city seemed to him "infinitely barren and ugly, reeking," as they did in those days, "with grime and smoke and drunkenness." There was no picture-gallery and no old churches with noble architecture and rich stained glass. Fairy-tales and poetry were rigidly banished from his nursery, and for years he had only three books—"Sandford and Merton," "Evenings at Home," and "Æsop's Fables," which last he liked best, because of the pictures. On his way to school the boy often lingered before the nearest bookseller's shop, reading the titles of the books in the window and envying the fortunate shopman within, never dreaming that he might some day be able to buy these coveted treasures. The child's romantic imagination had little enough to feed upon, but he made the most of such crumbs as fell to his share. The Bible stories which his father read to him in soft clear tones, sunk deep into